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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002698

**C O R R E C T E D C O P Y **

ADDED CAPTION

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SUBJECT: UNAMI EXPLORING BIGGER ROLE ON MEK

REF: A. BAGHDAD 2662

1B. BAGHDAD 2569

1C. BAGHDAD 2488

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Classified By: Acting DCM Gary A. Grappo for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: UNAMI is exploring the possibility of establishing an observation presence at Camp Ashraf and assuming a more direct role in mediating between the GOI and the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK) after two weeks in which the Embassy has worked with senior GOI officials, UN and ICRC representatives, as well as EU ambassadors, to craft a comprehensive approach to resolving the situation of the MEK at Ashraf. Our three-part message throughout has been intended to encourage: (1) UN assumption of a greater mediation role between the GOI and the MEK, (2) GOI delay efforts to relocate the MEK until after national elections, and (3) third country resettlement of former residents of Ashraf. The Embassy will continue engaging with the GOI and UNAMI and will provide recommendations on next steps by October 8. END SUMMARY.

UNAMI Exploring Bigger Role on MEK

12. (C) On September 26, Pol M/C met with SRSG Ad Melkert to press a request that the UN assume a greater role in mediating between the GOI and the MEK. Pol M/C emphasized that the presence of an international organization at Ashraf would give confidence to residents that the GOI will abide by its commitments not to forcibly repatriate them to a country where there is a risk of torture or persecution once they are relocated. UNAMI's involvement would also disabuse the MEK of the notion that U.S. forces would intervene to stop a relocation effort. Melkert agreed that the UN should play a role to help avoid any escalation or violence at Ashraf, but emphasized he did not want the UN to be in the position of "monitoring an imterminable situation." He expressed concern that if the UN began to mediate that the U.S. and the EU would disengage. Pol M/C replied that the U.S. would stay engaged on the MEK issue, but that the UN needed to take a more visible role if progress is to be made on the issue. Melkert indicated it was vitally important that the U.S. consider accepting some MEK members once their status as refugees could be established. He noted the symbolic importance of the U.S. taking this action in order to spur other governments to do the same.

13. (C) On September 27, Sr. RefCoord also met with ICRC Head of Iraq Delegation Juan-Pedro Schaeerer (strictly protect) to discuss the possibility of the ICRC assuming a mediation role between the GOI and the MEK. Schaeerer stated that he

believed the ICRC would not be accepted by the MEK in any kind of mediation role because: the MEK leadership was furious with the ICRC over its determination that the group was not entitled to protected persons status under the 4th Geneva Convention; and also because, in a communication with the MEK leadership, the ICRC had informed the MEK that the ICRC effectively had concluded that the GOI had the right to move the Ashraf camp if it chose to do so, assuming that the GOI did do so in conformity with applicable international law.

¶4. (C) On October 1, UNAMI's Chief Human Rights Officer Tahar Boumedra met with Pol M/C to say that UNAMI was seriously considering the establishment of a "long-term" presence at Camp Ashraf with 3 UN officers and their supporting staff and that Melkert had asked him to assess the situation on the ground. Boumedra asked what logistical support UNAMI could expect were it to establish a presence at Ashraf. MNF-I Oexpect were it to establish a presence at Ashraf. MNF-I Chief of Staff BG Joe Anderson told Boumedra that U.S. forces were prepared to offer any logistical support required including air transportation and office and living space at FOB Grizzly for 18 persons. On October 7, MNF-I will transport a UNAMI team to FOB Grizzly to conduct an assessment of the facilities and determine what additional requirements may be needed.

Delaying MEK Relocation Efforts

¶5. (C) On September 22, the Ambassador met with PM Maliki and urged him to delay relocating the MEK until after elections to avoid the potential for violence and a new crisis. The PM stated that "something has to be done" before the January elections and that inaction would only open him to criticism from parties with a more hardline stance on the MEK. He said that he planned to execute the relocation before the January national elections (ref A). (NOTE: The MEK is deeply unpopular among Shia and Kurdish elements in Iraq based on

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its involvement in Saddam-era actions against these groups.
END NOTE.)

¶6. (C) Pol M/C met with PM advisor Sadiq al-Rikabi on September 27 to stress the need for delay in order to allow the possibilities for negotiations with the MEK and third party mediation to play itself out. Pol M/C also emphasized that involving the UN to assist with negotiations and relocation of the MEK would only improve prospects for a peaceful resolution and add credibility to the process. Rikabi recognized these points and stated that he would pass them to the appropriate persons. On September 28, PAO met with GOI spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh and delivered the same points. On October 1, the Ambassador again met with PM Maliki and highlighted UNAMI's desire to assume a greater role on the MEK. The PM assured the Ambassador that he would proceed with caution and allow the MEK to be relocated with dignity (ref B).

¶7. (C) On October 4, Pol M/C met with Ali al-Yassery, the head of the GOI's Ashraf Committee (and a close relative of the PM). Yassery reiterated to Pol M/C the GOI's commitment to meet with the MEK leadership before any attempt to relocate the residents is initiated. Yassery stated that he would visit Ashraf soon and that the GOI's next steps would depend on the outcome of those discussions. (Note: Yassery's visit was originally scheduled for October 7, but he cancelled for undisclosed reasons. End note.) Yassery asked that the next discussion include the GOI, the U.S., UNAMI, and the MEK at the same table and that the discussion take place at a site controlled by the GOI. He said that if the MEK were willing to discuss a peaceful transfer away from Ashraf and tone down their rhetoric against the GOI, then the GOI would be willing to allow them to stay in Iraq for an

extended period of time. If, however, the MEK proved obstinate, Yassery predicted that the GOI would have no choice but to "execute" the 55 outstanding Interpol arrest warrants for the MEK's top leadership as well as 37 recently issued arrest warrants by an Iraqi court for terrorist-related crimes committed in Iraq.

Resettlement to Third Countries

¶ 8. (C/NF) With respect to efforts to resettle MEK refugees, on September 27, UNHCR Senior Protection Office Carolyn Ennis told Sr. RefCoord confidentially (please protect) that Denmark, Australia and another unnamed country had informed UNHCR that they would consider looking at UNHCR referrals of MEK defectors for possible resettlement as refugees. She added that UNHCR country representative Daniel Endres will meet with Assistant High Commissioner for Protection Erika Feller in Geneva to discuss how best to approach possible resettlement of existing and possible future MEK defectors. On October 3, SRSG Melkert hosted a meeting of the U.S. (attended by Pol M/C), European and Japanese representatives to discuss the issue of MEK resettlement. Melkert stressed that a commitment from as many countries as possible to resettle members of the MEK would be needed in order to break the deadlock at Ashraf. A number of countries indicated that they had a number of citizens or former residents at Ashraf including Italy (95), United Kingdom (85), Denmark (15), Germany (9), and Sweden (16). Melkert emphasized the GOI's need to establish a facility of sufficient quality to attract Ashraf residents to relocate and large enough to serve as a refugee processing center for those who chose to leave. Qrefugee processing center for those who chose to leave.

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